

Chapter VIII

Community Building: WEaving Wallingford

Tearn Wallingford's Vision Statement and Phase I and 11 surveys reveal a neighborhood that places a high value on family, home, and community. The Community Building work group was an outgrowth of this sentiment. The primary proposal of that work group— the WEaving Wallingford project — seeks to nurture those values by enhancing communication and providing a focal point for citizen action within Wallingford. The proposal has been designated as a “Key Project” because of its role in bringing the multitude of different organizations in the community together to implement and steward the Neighborhood Plan.

Building community depends on hundreds of individual citizens choosing to take days, hours, or even minutes out of their busy lives to contribute in some way to the general good of the 'hood. WEaving Wallingford would be dedicated to consolidating, informing and organizing those often discrete volunteer moments into a sustained resource to enhance all the attributes of community — shared values, improvement projects, attentiveness to the needs of others, community resources for education, intergenerational contact, and, well, fun. It would primarily be coordinated by a dedicated full-time staff person in an office accessible and visible to the general public. The staff person, hired and supervised by the WEaving Wallingford Steering Committee, would manage projects, volunteers and events and perform office support tasks.

CONTEXT **PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

Past to Present: Wallingford is a neighborhood rich in community spirit. It has many community-based organizations whose effectiveness has been the result of enormous efforts of citizen volunteers. The Wallingford Community Council, in its current form, is a registered non-profit organization that dates back to the late 1960s and has an illustrious history of community activism around zoning, design, transportation and community assets. The Wallingford Chamber of Commerce has been effective over the years as well in representing the interests of the business community. The City's Block Watch program in Wallingford is one of its most successful, with ties to both the Community Council and the Chamber. It provides a further example of that rich vein of volunteerism.

Like all volunteer organizations, the membership and impact of these organizations has waxed and waned, leaving occasional power inequalities in their relationships. While there has been a history of disagreement between the Chamber and the Community Council — over issues of access and parking in the business district and nearby residential areas - their joint sponsorship of Team Wallingford has brought the two organizations together not only for planning, but for several unrelated projects that have been initiated during the planning process. Now, at the conclusion of the planning process, both the Community Council and the Chamber of Commerce have more active members and far greater impact than they did before planning began - and they see the potential for even more!

In addition to community volunteer organizations, Wallingford is fortunate to be home to a multitude of community-minded service groups and organizations — including the Boys and Girls Club, the 45th Street Clinic, and the ACCESS project — that have proven to be significant resources within the neighborhood. Recently, the Fremont Public Association and Family Works have joined the ranks of those service organizations, opening a facility on 45th Street that houses a family resource center, a food bank, and very soon, the relocated Wallingford-Wilmot Library.

Churches, too, such as Saint Benedict, Keystone, and others, provide services to their parishioners and celebrations and public events for the community. And the community is enriched by the dozens of small organizations housed at the Good Shepherd Center, including the Wallingford Senior Center, which has provided a meeting facility for a good portion of this planning effort. Finally, Hamilton, Latona, and Lincoln public schools and several private institutions have also been a significant part of the community fabric.

Present to Future: In 1995, the City's Neighborhood Planning Program enlisted another entire cadre of people in improving their community, drawn from all these organizations as well as from general citizens without affiliation. This group, co-sponsored by the Community Council and the Wallingford Chamber of Commerce, was named "Team Wallingford," and it has met regularly ever since to develop and manage the community effort to produce a meaningful neighborhood plan. The process in itself has revitalized the sense of community and shared purpose among Wallingford's diverse groups and organizations. Each has contributed in an exciting way to the development of the neighborhood plan.

The success of the planning effort has opened our eyes to a possibly more effective way of building community, holding it together, and getting things done. The principles of that mode of operation, and of WEaving Wallingford, are:

- . Successful relationships among a wide variety of constituencies
- . A strong focus on communication and seeking feedback from the entire community
- . Decision-making on the basis of substantial consensus among all constituencies
 - a collaborative and mutually respectful relationship with City government
- . Make the most of scarce resources for the greatest impact through volunteerism

The impetus behind WEaving Wallingford is to capture and extend the above principles over the long term in order to successfully bring the ideals and ideas of the neighborhood plan to a successful conclusion.

It is also born of a desire to share information with the community about important events and new developments, and help organize volunteer opportunities, new projects, and collaborative action on a multitude of fronts. By cooperating with and strengthening community organizations, WEaving

Wallingford intends to nurture projects that improve the neighborhood, implement the long-term goals of the neighborhood planning effort, bring community factions together into mediation and consensus-building, and, in general, increase the sense of neighborliness. The outcome is intended to be an enhanced community safety net that provides the cornerstone for the health of the individual and the sense of sociability within the community.

PLANNING BACKGROUND: HOW AND WHY DID IT START?

In an early survey of the Wallingford neighborhood, respondents said they wanted to build a stronger community and maintain the small town feeling of Wallingford. The Community Building work group arose to study that need, and implement measures that might be needed to meet it. WEaving Wallingford is the major recommendation of that study.

The work group began with a few Team Wallingford participants who recruited additional members from community-based organizations, service providers, and other constituencies in an attempt to achieve a balanced representation of stakeholders who have an interest in building community.

In the planning process, the community building group discovered that, while there are rich volunteer resources in Wallingford, much of the potential is wasted without adequate communication and volunteer coordination.

COMMUNITY BUILDING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following neighborhood goals were identified by the Community Building work group based on community surveys, feedback about Key Issues identified, and group discussions. They were used as the underlying principles in the design of WEaving Wallingford.

GOAL 1: Cultivate a sense of connectedness

Residents used to feel connected with their community because they had lived there for many years, but that's less often the case now. It's hard for new residents to break through the barriers and feel like they belong, particularly when most people work all day. Events and projects bring people together to share fun and common interests – the neighbor you didn't know turns out to be your friend, you both have roots in your community, and you care about what's going on in it.

GOAL 2: Assure plan stewardship and continue strategic planning for growth.

We've spent nearly 4 years preparing this Neighborhood Plan, but if it's a plan without follow-up it won't help Wallingford at all. The neighborhood can only benefit if we consistently pursue the priorities we identified in the process. Various existing entities like Community Council Committees and the Chamber of Commerce, will naturally oversee certain portions of the plan, but without coordination, our commitment and our vision will be difficult to maintain.

Strategic planning for a growing area needs to occur on an ongoing basis. There is no way to foresee all the potential impacts that the next 20 years of growth will have on Wallingford. Unless we establish an effective process to continuously engage in strategic planning, we will limit our opportunities to have meaningful influence over our fate between now and when the planning exercise begins again around

2018 (maybe). Stopping cold at this point would mean losing much of what we have gained in the community planning process.

Teamwork with City Departments has been another beneficial outcome of Seattle's planning process that needs to be nurtured instead of squandered. We all come out ahead if the norm for the City Departments is to work with their customers toward excellent outcomes all the time instead of making occasional efforts to do so only during planning. Everyone is benefiting from this new paradigm and it's worth preserving.

GOAL 3: Increase civic engagement and build an empowered community.

The neighborhood can be much more powerful if it plans for change and implements processes to deal with it in an orderly fashion. When Team Wallingford began planning in 1994, it provided a way for people to get involved in the running of their neighborhood before they became angry about something. TW brought in many participants who have the enthusiasm, the skills, and the inclination to participate in proactive pursuits.

Participation in the Community Council has changed considerably, but its role remains the same. If the residents of Wallingford want to sustain the positive changes that have occurred, and continue to nurture healthy, effective problem-solving processes, we have to create a way to keep engaging citizens in neighborhood processes because they know they can make a difference, not because they're angry about something.

GOAL 4 Coordinate resources in a neighborhood that is lucky enough to have surpluses they're willing to share.

During the planning process Wallingford, located along the most direct route between I-5 and Ballard, identified traffic as our most overwhelming problem. Respondents' second (albeit very distant!) major concern was the need for a feeling of community and connection within their neighborhood – “Wallingford is like a ‘small town in the big city’, let's build on that.” It's true that traffic reduces the quality of our lives and it needs to be managed. And there's a dearth of open space and law enforcement, as well as people in need of assistance in Wallingford. All that said, the neighborhood seems to have as many or more resources to offer than are needed and we're looking for ways to share what we have with our neighbors.

Valuable resources are squandered when provider and recipient don't connect. Community organizations need help finding available meeting rooms, targeted populations need assistance with ADUs, low-income families have to find family day-care, local employers need to be connected with residents who prefer to walk to work, property owners need to connect with desirable developers, non-resident property owners need to hire local maintenance providers. WEaving Wallingford can find creative and resourceful ways to bring these people together.

CHALLENGES: POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

Major questions surfaced during public review and discussion of this proposal and subsequent responses. The questions revolved around the relationship of WEaving Wallingford to other community-based organizations. For example:

- . Do we need another organization?
- . Will WEaving Wallingford supplant existing organizations — particularly the Community Council and the Chamber of Commerce?
- . How will decision-making be accountable to the neighborhood (and its organizations)?
- . Will information-sharing become subject to censorship?

Even though neighborhood support for the idea was overwhelming when the idea was presented to the community in November 1997, the above questions consistently resurfaced as the organization began to take shape.

Therefore, to address these questions, the amended proposal recommends that WEaving Wallingford be positioned just as Team Wallingford was – as a joint sub-committee of the Community Council and the Chamber of Commerce – a structure that has been proven to serve the community well. The principles of that sub-committee should not deviate from the following

- It will nurture, enhance and strengthen existing organizations, not supplant them
- It will be developed and organized with substantial participation by members of existing organizations.
- It will not “take positions” on issues, but rather will be a conveyor of positions that have been taken by others in the community.
- It will facilitate and mediate community discussion over differences, not impose solutions.
- Its role in information dispersal will be to share, not limit or interpret.

The plan presents a different problem-solving paradigm for the City and other local governments collaborative teamwork between City departments and the neighborhood that's based on a strong customer-supplier relationship. We anticipate that the City will recognize the significant potential benefits to all and will work with the community to create a model for implementation and provide the funding necessary for success.

CB1.0 PROPOSAL

Develop a new organization called **WEaving Wallingford** that will operate a Community Office, centrally and visibly located within the neighborhood, and will achieve the above four goals through five neighborhood “networks”.

CB1.1 A NEW ORGANIZATION – WEaving Wallingford

WEaving Wallingford will be organized as a joint sub-committee of the Wallingford Community Council and the Wallingford Chamber of Commerce, led by a steering committee and chair, with a structure similar to that which has guided Team Wallingford since 1995. Its main focus will be on building community, enhancing communication, and volunteer & resource coordination. The two sponsoring organizations will be encouraged to create Planning Committees that facilitate Plan stewardship and continue strategic planning for growth.

The Community Council and Chamber of Commerce are also being urged to create positions on their Boards of Directors to accommodate WEaving Wallingford representation. The overlapping leadership will create strong linkages among the three organizations, allowing many activities, including the stewardship over the Neighborhood Plan, to become the joint responsibility of all three organizations working as a team.

CB1.1.1 MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF WEAVING WALLINGFORD

We believe that the following activities will help us achieve the community building goals listed above. The tasks listed are but a few of the ones identified in the planning process. Future possibilities are limited **only by the imaginations of Wallingford residents and the resources available to pursue their ideas.**

- Community building through projects and events: Actively solicit and develop ideas for projects and events; assist with project and volunteer management; seek out funding alternatives and assist with grant-writing for community projects; provide project organizers with office support and publicity; and maintain community archives.
- Communication: Maintain the Community Contact List that was developed during the planning process (with over 1,500 community and City contacts); maintain the website (www.wallingford.erg); continue e-mail news distribution that began early in 1997 as part of Team Wallingford outreach; pursue acquisition of community kiosks; publish a community newsletter; develop a complete community directory and a coordinated events calendar; sponsor quarterly meetings that bring together various neighborhood organizations, service providers, other neighborhoods, etc.; and offer one-stop information and referral from the WEaving Wallingford office.
- Establishing healthy neighborhood decision-processes: . Teach group facilitation skills to community leaders; model inclusive processes that reach toward neighborhood consensus; and use education to support informed decision-making.
- Stewardship of the outcomes of Neighborhood Planning: Pursue the elements of the plan and continue strategic planning for the neighborhood. Nurture the increased civic engagement, collaborative processes, and the City-Neighborhood teamwork we've developed as a result of the planning process.

CB1.2 AN OFFICE AND SUPPORT STAFF

Wallingford has a priceless asset in its volunteers. In order to use their time and energy effectively, we need to provide them with two things a public space where they can connect with the community and share work – one that will also serve as a central location for the things essential to doing business, and a paid employee to support their activities.

CB1.2.1 NEED TO START RIGHT NOW

If we want to continue our forward progress we need to get this project in motion immediately. Many of its elements - the website, the e-news, many projects and events, budding relationships with our City Departments, the 1,500 member community-contact list - are in effect right now. They'll fade away without a way to sustain and nurture them. Start-up funding for WEaving Wallingford offers an opportunity to invest dollar resources where they can return many times their value in previously untapped community resources.

CB1.2.2 A COMMUNITY OFFICE

The goals of WEaving Wallingford are ambitious and can provide substantial benefits to the neighborhood and the City, yet none of them can be achieved and sustained with only a few dedicated volunteers working out of their homes. We therefore propose establishing a WEaving Wallingford office that:

- Is centrally and visibly located so it will be perceived as a neighborhood focal point;
- Offers a friendly and welcoming space that conveys Wallingford's "small town in the big city" atmosphere;
- Provides visitors with on-site information and referral for all things related to Wallingford;
- . Will serve the Community Council and the Chamber of Commerce also (neither organization has a suitable office at this time);
- . Offers office space where several volunteers can work together as a team - sharing knowledge, ideas, and enthusiasm;
- . Will be furnished with necessary computers and office equipment;
- Provides a meeting space for small groups.

CB1.2.3 OFFICE SUPPORT EMPLOYEE

Sustaining WEaving Wallingford as a neighborhood resource is as important as getting it established in the first place. We propose hiring an office support person, employed by the WEaving Wallingford leadership, to assure that the following tasks are performed dependably and with necessary expertise

- . **Volunteer coordination and project management.** These activities that are not only very labor-intensive, but they often require specific skills and training to do them effectively. These jobs can't be done intermittently and qualified volunteers may not always be available.
- . **Office management.** Without constant oversight, even small things like retrieving phone messages and returning calls fall through the cracks, hurting the effectiveness and image of the organization. Essential tasks like keeping the office dependably staffed and fully functional will require having one individual who can be there most of the time to teach and direct volunteers. Project volunteers have agreed to fill this role temporarily out of their commitment to establishing WEaving Wallingford as a neighborhood resource, but the job will be extremely

demanding of their time. It isn't realistic to expect that this role will be filled by volunteers indefinitely.

- . Provide institutional memory as the volunteers come and go. Volunteers frequently leave unexpectedly, often taking a wealth of accumulated knowledge with them. Of course paid personnel will depart too, but they're far more likely to preserve valuable information as an asset by passing it along to their successor before they leave. The organization can achieve much more if it can move ahead with some continuity instead of being forced to reinvent the wheel every time a valued volunteer moves on to other pursuits.

CB1.3 THE FIVE “NETWORKS”

To achieve its stated goals, WEaving Wallingford will create and support five sets of neighborhood constituencies with the following objectives

Civic Network

- . Support the Community Council, historically the neighborhood's connection with City Hall;
- . Preserve and build on the knowledge, increased participation, and City-Neighborhood teamwork established by Team Wallingford.

Business Network

- . Support the chamber of Commerce
- . Establish linkages with existing and potential businesses and business groups, including a large number of residents who conduct business from their homes, recognizing their role as neighborhood assets and expanding their potential to influence.

Human Services Network (Organizing and developing this network is a primary recommendation of the Human Services Work Group [HS-1.1]):

- Encourage linkages among churches, schools, social service providers, housing organizations, etc., making them stronger to better serve the community.

Neighbor Network:

This network would consist of WEaving Wallingford representatives from throughout the neighborhood, perhaps building on the grid-like Block Watch system. Each representative would:

- serve as the point of contact with a small constituency and provide a linkage to WEaving Wallingford;
- contact new neighbors moving in;
- . know the local concerns;
- . keep an informal “assets inventory” and know the needs of people in a designated area.

Community Resource Network

- Help facilitate neighborhood actions and assets, connecting people who have project ideas with the volunteer and financial resources required to get them done;
- Connect various service, arts, and cultural organizations in the community with each other;
- Pursue or strengthen desirable resources such as a Performing Arts Center, a Community Center, and the Library.

CB1.4 ORGANIZATION WORKPLAN

The Community Building Work Group is convinced that this concept can't be sustained over time without a paid employee. We're equally certain that it can't get started right now without an office. Tasks for the office support staff could easily require one (efficient) full-time employee. However, since we see no way to fund the position at this time, we're proposing to continue with volunteer labor and delay hiring the staff person in order to direct all available funding to the establishment of the community office, considered to be a more immediate need.

Furnishing an office space and leasing it for one year is estimated to cost up to \$50,000. Therefore, we propose the following 3-Year Work Plain

- Year 1 – Ask that the \$50,000 Wallingford early implementation funding be used to establish a Community office somewhere near 45th and Wallingford. Use the year to formalize and refine the WEaving Wallingford organization and to develop sources for future funding as we demonstrate the value of the organization to the community and the City. Apply for semi-annual Neighborhood Matching Funds for year 2 operations.
- Year 2 - Continue to operate the office with Neighborhood Matching Fund grants. Meanwhile, apply for foundation, Neighborhood Matching and other grants, capitalizing on the organization's proven track record for efficiency, effectiveness, and performance. Seek other ways of funding WEaving Wallingford operations - co-locating with other organizations, soliciting donations, charging for support services provided, and perhaps holding a fund-raising event.
- Year 3 and beyond - Operate the Community Office with combined funding from grants and internally-generated resources. Consider hiring Office support staff based on need and available resources.

CB1.5 FROM VISION TO REALITY

What we need from the community

- Individuals and Community Organizations working together toward the vision of a strong community.
- Strong Community Council and Chamber of Commerce leaders who are committed to plan stewardship.
- Volunteers with ideas, time, energy, and/or expertise to share with their neighbors.
- Donated resources in the form of office space, equipment and services.

What we need from the City.

- Start-up grant to get organization going right now, while the knowledge base is timely.
- Commitment from within City Departments to nurture the City-Neighborhood teamwork that began as a result of neighborhood planning.
- A City “ombudsman” or other designated connection to help Wallingford navigate City Hall politics when the Neighborhood Planning Office goes away.
- Willingness of the Mayor, and City Council to continue exploring the possibilities of City-Neighborhood teamwork. Perhaps by helping to find a way to foster the creation of a WEaving Wallingford-like organization in every neighborhood so we can all grow strong together.

Funding and sources:

- . A sustainable funding source of \$25,000-\$50,000 per year will pay for a coordinator position, office space and ongoing expenses
- . Neighborhood Matching Grants – perhaps from a category specifically targeting organizations committed to community building and empowerment.
- . Foundation grants
- . Payment from other agencies/organizations who might benefit from our services,
- . Shared expenses with the Community Council and the Chamber of Commerce.
- . Fund-raising events that also build community.

Weaving

COMMUNITY
RESOURCES
NETWORK

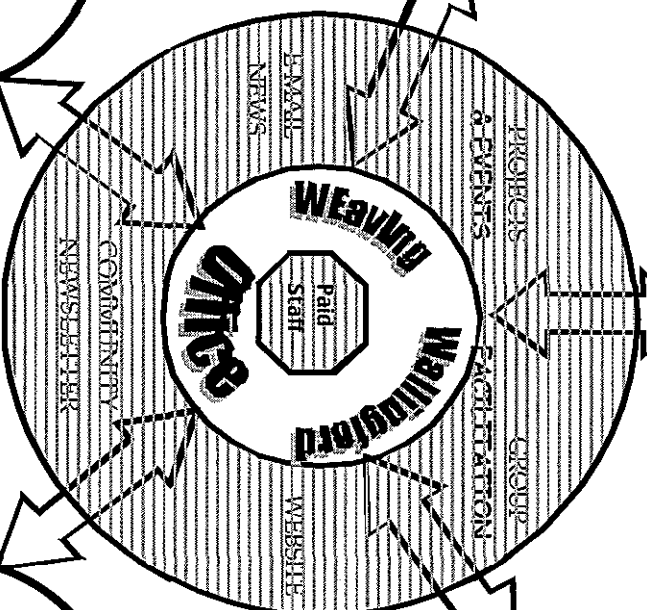
Wallingford

CIVIC
NETWORK

NEIGHBOR
NETWORK

BUSINESS
NETWORK

HUMAN
SERVICES
NETWORK



A Model For A
Neighborhood
Network